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VETERANS: HONORING THE CONTRIBUTIONS OF THOSE WHO HAVE SERVED

Representative Schwartz is the proud daughter of a Korean War veteran. Her father's service to the nation helped shape her deep respect for our country and her strong sense of patriotism.

Pennsylvania is home to over 1,280,000 veterans, and during this time of war, more soldiers return home as veterans every day. They have fought to protect the freedoms we enjoy as citizens of the United States, and they have provided critical assistance to Americans in need after natural disasters and civil emergencies. Representative Schwartz believes that all veterans are owed a debt of gratitude matched with a commitment to provide them with the benefits they have been promised.

EQUIPPING OUR CURRENT SOLDIERS

Representative Schwartz believes that in addition to providing for our veterans, our nation must also make a commitment to the men and women currently serving in the military. She has fought to ensure that our troops have the resources they need to safely and effectively complete their missions. She has also consistently supported efforts to provide necessary body armor and other personal protection, upgraded Humvees, and the latest in combat technology to our soldiers in the field.

RESPECTING SOLDIERS'S SERVICE AND THEIR FAMILIES' SACRIFICES

Just three months after being sworn into office, Representative Schwartz introduced her first major legislative proposal and directed it at our newest veterans. The *Veterans Employment and Respect Act* (VERA) would help ease the financial burdens soldiers and their families' face as a result of their service. Specifically, it would extend the Work Opportunity Tax Credit (WOTC) to employers who hire our veterans returning from Iraq or Afghanistan or their dependents, allowing them to claim a one time credit of up to \$1,500 for part-time workers or \$2,400 for fulltime workers. Enactment of this bipartisan proposal is one of the important steps the federal government should take to acknowledge the sacrifices made by our soldiers. Ultimately, VERA would help those returning from service to comfortably readjust to civilian life, obtain employment and provide support to the families shouldering the financial burdens of having a loved one deployed overseas.

MEETING THE HEALTH CARE NEEDS OF VETERANS

In June 2005, the Bush Administration acknowledged that the Veterans Affairs health system was facing a shortfall of \$3 billion. Representative Schwartz consistently supported efforts to cover this shortfall, and has continued to fight for sufficient, ongoing funding for the VA health care system.

Since President Bush took office, each year he has proposed increased co-pays and enrollment fees on American veterans. From her seat on the House Budget Committee, Representative Schwartz has voted to fully fund veterans' health care as well as to reject the increased fees and co-pays proposed by the President. She and her colleagues have also successfully crafted bipartisan solutions that met the needs of veterans without subjecting them to new fees.

Representative Schwartz believes that veterans health care funding should not be an annual debate. She supports a bipartisan effort to make spending on veterans health care mandatory – guaranteeing that the VA receives federal funds at the beginning of every fiscal year and removing funding decisions for veterans' health care programs from the often partisan, yearly budget process.

SUPPORTING OUR NATIONAL GUARD AND RESERVE FORCES

The National Guard and the other Reserve Components are essential to our nation's national defense and homeland security. In Pennsylvania, the Guard and Reserves continue to play an active role in defending the nation and supporting the Global War on Terrorism. Representative Schwartz has fought to provide these soldiers with the equipment they need. She has also been a leader in the fight to ensure that the Department of Defense does not down-size, or otherwise weaken, the National Guard.

OFFERING ADDITIONAL SERVICES FOR SOLDIERS AND THEIR FAMILIES

Long deployments in combat areas can be emotionally difficult for even the most seasoned soldier or military family. That is why Representative Schwartz is a supporter of legislation that would improve mental health services for soldiers and their families in order to help them through a potentially difficult time in their lives.